

Montgomery County Universal Preschool Implementation Work Group  
October 30, 2008  
6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Council Office Building, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room  
100 Maryland Avenue  
Rockville, MD 20850

## **MINUTES**

*Members present:*

Kate Garvey  
Janine Bacquie  
Jane Seffel  
Julie Bader  
Lindsey Allard  
Mary Lang  
Brad Stewart  
Gene Counihan  
Traci McLemore  
Anne McLeer for Jackie Lichter  
Jose Alvarez- parent representative  
Rolf Grafwallner  
Clara Floyd  
Jennifer Devine

Members not present:

Khadra Ayorinde

The meeting was called to order at 6:08 p.m. The Work Group received a briefing on the Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland's Preschool for All Business Plan: A Draft Proposal from Rolf Grafwallner. Mr. Grafwallner highlighted the following:

Oversight of the proposed Preschool for All program is with MSDE while the oversight of the current Preschool program is with the local boards (local Board of Education). Preschool for All is for children whose family income is above 180% of the Federal poverty guidelines. This proposed program goes beyond the mandate of Bridge to Excellence because it serves as an addition to the current Preschool program. It is intended to serve pre-kindergarten students who are not income eligible for prekindergarten services under the Bridge to Excellence guidelines.

Funding: The long term view focuses on the funding stream similar to EEEP and will phase in preschool for all income groups. 250% or 300% above federal guidelines will be the threshold to receive subsidies for Preschool for All. Since there is a steep drop off

for low income families that do not currently meet the income requirements for the three existing childcare subsidies (HeadStart, Preschool, or Purchase of Care for Center/Family Childcare), a way to bridge the gap is to provide preschool services to these families under the guidelines established by the Preschool for All Task Force.

A prekindergarten program in an accredited facility would provide a program similar to the program provided by the public school system. It would either be a half day or full day program.

However, resources are needed to provide quality instruction, certified teachers, and an enriching curriculum.

The cost element is broken out into two concepts:

- Base Cost- regular operation of the program (who pays for this program)
- Enhancement Costs- increase costs to bring the program up to the standards

More details on this can be found on pages 29-33 of the Business Plan.

The State is reluctant to provide the sole source of funding for the program so the local government would have to contribute. The proposal is a 70%/30% split with the state contributing 70% and the local government contributing 30%. The current funding level for public education for k-12 is 50% by the state and 50% by local governments.

To help facilitate the administration of the program, a review panel will be established in the local jurisdiction to provide a:

1. Needs assessment- where are the most immediate needs?
2. Review proposals- make recommendations to the state
3. Engagement with programs

#### Work Group Comments/Questions:

Has there been an examination of the work force implication? There has been an examination of the work force. There is a scholarship program that can address the certification of teachers who currently have a 4 year degree. However, there is reluctance among 4 year colleges to receive such a program. There is another program that allows teachers to begin their education at the community college level and then matriculate to a 4 year college to complete the education degree and graduate with a teaching certification. A waiver process that resembles a provisional certification for teachers may be used to build up the resource of certified teachers.

The allocation of state Preschool for All funds will be disbursed using the same formula as other state aid. There will be an RFP issued by late winter for additional pilot sites.

Professional Development- this requirement for teachers does not change under Preschool for All.

The economic impact of the unintended consequences for childcare providers offering services for children from the ages of birth to 3 years old- has not been examined when

determining the need or success of Preschool for All. The Work Group should be cognizant of the unintended consequences of the cost implications for birth to 3 year old care when making recommendation on how Preschool for All should be implemented in the county.

The Work Group should examine the cost benefit analysis of delaying funding for the Preschool for All program against what happens to students in the later years who have not had the early educational benefits that help shape success in high school and beyond.

Councilmember Marc Elrich addressed the group. He urged the group to examine the full day option for preschool because programs should look at the families that are intended to be served. Recommendations should also focus on the Child Development Model- how to teach a child to be a willing and active learner and explore their curiosity.

Panelist:

Randi Albertson, The Young School, Howard County

She serves as the liaison between The Young School, Howard County Public Schools and other county agencies. This school is a non-traditional preschool because it follows the Reggio program and the Cottage system where each room is not self contained and has a mix of three and four year olds. The pilot program first addressed the way to identify eligibility criteria for children who could receive the tuition discount through the grant. The criteria was based on the gap identified by the public schools for children who don't meet the income qualifications for Head Start or Preschool but will benefit from a preschool program. Most of these students are English Language Learners that the public school system is not meeting their needs. The next level of income eligibility is 300% above the poverty level.

Another issue addressed by the school was the expectation of services offered to students and how the private provider's preschool compared with the public school preschool program. The first step taken was to examine developmental screening. The public school system does not provide developmental screening but the grant is allowing the Young School to examine what kind of screening can be provided for young children which is driving the public school system to examine appropriate screenings.

Staff Development- Six teachers currently work in the classroom with four year degrees and receive the same training as public school teachers from the public school system, when appropriate. The school also uses the State MMSR assessment, which is used in the public school system, to collect data on the 29 indicators for all 60 students in the classroom.

The school has submitted their own curriculum to MSDE for approval.

Flora Gee, Greenbelt Children's Center, Prince George's County

This program uses the Houghton Mifflin Curriculum; Hugs and Tugs (social/emotional) and other additional resources to supplement the curriculum. The grant funding pays for part of the salary of paraprofessional (7 hours/day); 40% child care subsidy for all parents in the program; an evaluation of the grant- outside evaluators assess the children; Wolf Trap Artist in Residency; Vision and Hearing Screening; Early Childhood Consultative Services for each child (free counseling for families with a social worker, technical assistance with teachers); Spanish language instruction; technology support; physical education; field trips; book club events and a host of other resources.

Prince George's County Public Schools pays for 1 full time teacher that works in the childcare center. However, the paraprofessionals who provide services to the students in the preschool program receive a bonus.

#### Special Needs Students:

Since this center has a program that integrates children with disabilities, success is achieved by utilizing community supports that are available. Additional financial resources for Child Find is essential for identifying special needs children.

Ginny Simoneau, Walkersville Childcare Center (MSDE Accreditation), Frederick County

Students for the preschool program were selected by utilizing current Head Start class. The center was able to offer afternoon Preschool to these students. To fill the additional spots, the center went to the public school to take children from the waitlist of the public school preschool program. The program has 19 four year olds in a 2.5 hour program and uses the FCPS school curriculum. The teachers are Walkersville Childcare Center employees hired at the school system pay grade although the grant proposal was written to have Frederick County Public School employ the teacher. The preschool program is free for the children and surround care is offered for children at an hourly rate.

The center has three children with special needs. Occupational therapy and speech services come to the center because the center tries to provide as many services as possible to the children while under their care. These services are provided by Frederick County Public Schools. Head Start does health and vision screenings for the students.

The teacher participates in teacher orientations with the schools and is a part of the Glade Elementary team of teachers.

#### Work Group Follow Up Items:

The next meeting will be in the Council Office Building Cafeteria- 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor. The Parent Forum will be held as a roundtable discussion in the community instead of hosting a formal public forum. The participants can discuss their needs and expectations of what preschool should be in an informal setting. Additional input from parents can also be gathered through surveys.

Parent Groups will be contacted to try to connect with groups of parents.

A suggestion was made to contact Frankie Blackburn from Impact Silver Spring since this is a service they already provide. Other groups that have regular contact with parents are:

- Parent/Teacher Associations
- Healthy Families
- Judy Centers
- Learning Parties

Questions will be developed to ask the parents.

The group agreed to have a second public forum to allow the public to discuss comment on the final draft of the report.

If the group has questions regarding the NAEYC presentation, please email Lindsey Allard.

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.